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Assessing farmers’ attitudes toward organic fertilisers in Kiambu and Kirinyaga counties, Kenya

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Abstract

Agricultural production is hampered by factors such as low productivity resulting from a decline in soil fertility and soil health. Organic fertiliser is recognised as an agricultural approach that can reduce direct production expenses, improve environmental advantages, and increase crop yields. Despite the benefits organic fertiliser poses, its utilisation is low among smallholder farmers in Kenya. This is due to the risk of using contaminated raw materials, and insufficient material for decomposition among others. However, some entities are producing certified organic fertilisers and selling them to farmers. Yet, farmers’ attitudes towards these fertilisers are not known. To enhance the utilisation of organic fertilisers, the practice must align with farmers’ attitudes. Therefore, this study established the attitudes of smallholder farmers toward organic fertiliser utilisation. A farmer who has a positive attitude may influence fellow farmers to use the product. The research was carried out in the regions of Mwea and Githunguri subcounties in Kenya, where the production of organic fertilisers, such as bokashi and safi sarvi, takes place. The study employed purposive and simple random selection procedures to choose a sample size of 109 farmers. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data on farmers’ socio-economic characteristics and attitudes. Attitude was captured using fourteen (14) statements on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Descriptive statistics were used to identify the attitudes of farmers. Results showed that there were more women (58.7%) involved in farming activities than men because farming was the main occupation. In terms of attitudes, 11 out of the 14 statements were scored positively on the Likert scale (agree and strongly agree) revealing that the attitudes of the farmers towards organic fertilisers were positive. The study concluded that farmers had positive attitudes toward organic fertilisers, yet there is a need to improve sensitisation of organic fertilisers among farmers to increase their utilisation.

Keywords: Attitudes, Kenya, organic fertiliser, smallholder